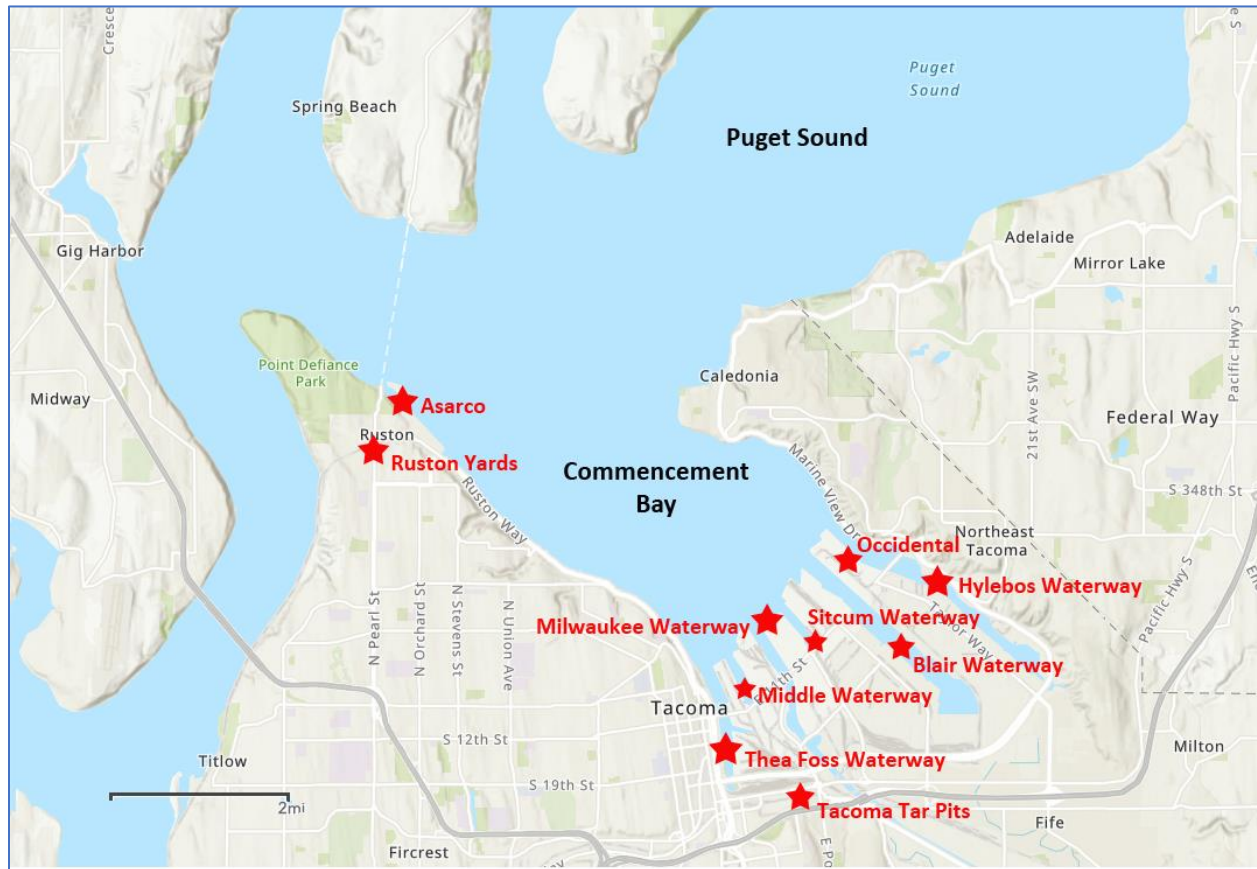


# Updates to the Commencement Bay Nearshore / Tideflats Superfund site

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

January 2020



The Commencement Bay Nearshore Tideflats (CB/NT) Superfund site is located in Tacoma and Ruston, Washington at the southern end of the main basin of Puget Sound. The site encompasses an active commercial seaport and includes 10-12 square miles of shallow water, shoreline, and adjacent land, most of which is highly developed and industrialized. The *nearshore* portion of the site is defined as the area along the Ruston shoreline from the mouth of Thea Foss Waterway to Pt. Defiance. The *tideflats* portion of the site includes the Hylebos, Blair, Sitcum, Milwaukee, St. Paul, Middle, Wheeler-Osgood, and Thea Foss waterways; the Puyallup River upstream to the Interstate-5 bridge; and the adjacent land areas.

Contaminants in the CB/NT area originate from both upland and in-water sources. With industrialization, hazardous substances and waste materials have contaminated the land, water, and sediments in many areas of the bay. Contaminants found in the nearshore area

include metals and various organic compounds such as polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), polynuclear aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs), and phthalates.

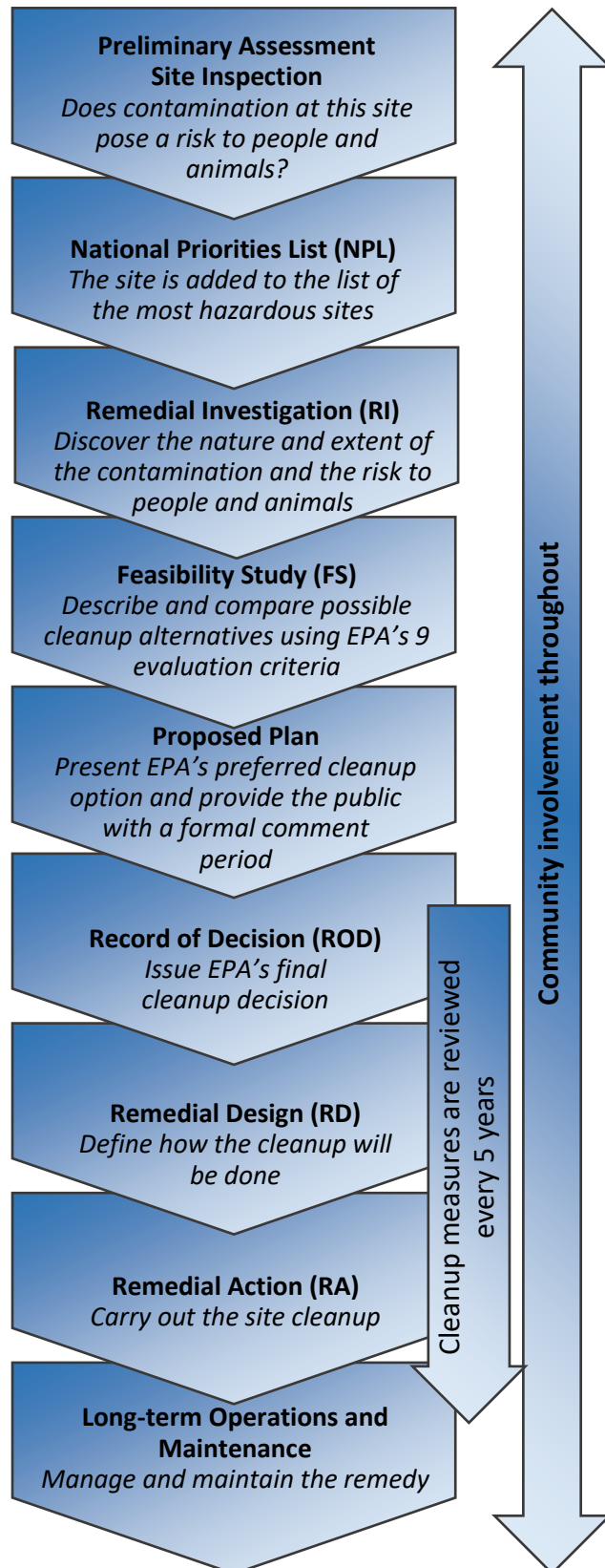
Although the Tacoma Pierce County Health Department has warned against regularly consuming fish, shellfish, and crabs caught within the study area, recreational harvesting of many of these species occurs, primarily within the Thea Foss Waterway and along the Ruston-Pt. Defiance Shoreline. Signs are posted around the waterway in 5 languages warning the public not to eat the fish and shellfish.

## The Superfund Process

Work at the CB/NT site is done under the Superfund process – shown in the graphic to the right. This site is partially in the Remedial Design and Remedial Action phase, and some of the site is in Long-term maintenance.

### Cleanup work at the site:

- **OU1-Sediments** – Cleanup construction in the sediment is now complete, except for the Occidental area in the Hylebos Waterway. This area will be monitored and institutional controls (land use restrictions) will be put in place to ensure areas where waste was left in place (i.e., under caps or at depth) and constructed habitat continue to protect people and the environment.
- **OU1/5 Removal Actions** – Cleanup construction at the Puyallup Land Claim, General Metals, Olympic View, Blair TBT, and Occidental Removal



Action sites are complete. These actions will need to be incorporated into the final cleanup actions for OU1. These areas will be monitored and institutional controls (land use restrictions) will be put in place to ensure areas where waste was left in place continue to protect people and the environment.

- **OU2- Asarco Tacoma Smelter Facility** – mid-RA, construction complete expected June 2021. Areas where construction is complete are monitored regularly and engineering control (fencing, temporary covers, etc.) are in place where construction is ongoing to ensure protection of the public and environment. The outer shoreline cap of the breakwater peninsula has failed, and EPA expects to install a new cap in 2020. EPA has installed signs to warn the public that this area is not safe (see photo, below).
- **OU3- Tacoma Tar Pits** – Construction of the cleanup is complete. Monitoring of groundwater is ongoing.
- **OU4- Asarco Off-Property** (referred to as Ruston/North Tacoma Study Area) – Cleanup construction of the CERCLA remedy is complete. Ecology is conducting additional cleanup to concentrations less than required by the ROD. Ecology is implementing Community Protection Measures with the Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department.
- **OU5-upland sources to the sediments** – Control of upland sources is complete, except for the Hylebos Waterway. Ongoing sources are monitored and institutional controls (land use restrictions, NPDES permits, etc.) will be put in place to ensure the waterways are not recontaminated.
- **OU6- Asarco Groundwater and Sediment** – Cleanup construction off-shore of the former Asarco smelter facility is complete. Groundwater monitoring wells and cleanup of the Yacht basin still needs to be conducted.
- **OU7-Asarco Facility Demolition** – Demolition of the Asarco facility was completed in 1995.

## Fish Sampling

EPA is conducting fish sampling from the CB/NT site to determine if the concentrations of PCBs (Aroclors) in fish meet the cleanup goals specified in the ROD. English sole was collected by Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife June 2019. The tissue (fillets) are also being analyzed for PCB congeners (low-resolution and high resolution) and dioxins to compare to other sites in Puget Sound and across the nation. Data analysis expected in the spring or summer and EPA will discuss findings with stakeholders before issuing a final report in early 2022.

## Five-year review report

The fifth FYR for the Commencement Bay Nearshore/Tideflats Superfund site is underway. The purpose of a five-year review is to look at the cleanup implementation and performance at a Superfund site to see if it's still protecting people and the environment. If the cleanup work is



still underway the five-year review ensures that the cleanup plan will protect people and the environment from contaminated water, soil, and air when it is complete.

EPA (the lead agency) is responsible for conducting the five-year review. EPA notifies the public, PRPs and other stakeholders when starting the five-year review to illicit input. EPA shares a draft of the review with the State and/or Tribe to obtain their input. When the review is complete, a public notice will be issued and copy of the report will be put on the EPA's website.

Conducting a five-year review includes reviewing existing documents and data, site tours, interviews of site stakeholders, and sometimes includes collecting additional data. Results of the CB/NT five-year review show that the site is either meeting performance standards or will meet performance standards upon final implementation.

## For additional information

EPA Project Manager, Kristine Koch

206-553-6705

[koch.kristine@epa.gov](mailto:koch.kristine@epa.gov)

[www.epa.gov/superfund/commencement-bay](http://www.epa.gov/superfund/commencement-bay)

